

REMARKS

Applicants initially thank the Examiner for withdrawing the rejection of the claims under 35 USC 103(a) over a combination of Yoshida and Hirota.

Claims 9 and 13-14 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 9 recites “an image processing apparatus that receives inputs through a plurality of input apparatuses respectively having different levels of ease of use.” This feature is not taught or suggested by the combination of Yoshida and Fukuda.

As the Examiner admits on page 4, first paragraph, of the Office Action, Yoshida does not teach a plurality of input apparatuses respectively having different levels of use. The Examiner suggests that Fukuda overcomes this deficiency because Fukuda discloses setting various operating modes having different levels of ease of use associated with a copy machine. As discussed in para. [0028] of the specification, examples of the claimed input apparatuses include a mouse, a joystick, a large display panel or the like. However, as depicted in Figs. 2-5 of Fukuda, the various operating modes of Fukuda are set through a single display screen (and thus a single input apparatus) and not a plurality of input apparatuses. Although the display screen of Fukuda displays different tabs (i.e., the basic screen tab in Fig. 2, the variable power tab in Fig. 3, function selection screen tab in Fig. 4, and the frame deletion tab in Fig. 5) through which the user can set the various operation modes, the display screen is itself the input apparatus configured to display these tabs when selected by the user. Therefore, the tabs in Fukuda do not correspond to the claimed “plurality of input apparatuses.”

Furthermore, the display tabs in Fukuda do not satisfy the claimed requirement that they have “different levels of ease of use.” Although the user in Fukuda sets the operation modes for the copy machine through the display tabs, the operation modes in Fukuda are related to the copy machine itself and do not relate to any levels of ease of use of the display tabs. In fact, there is no

teaching or suggestion in Fukuda that one display tab is more difficult or less difficult to use for the user than another display tab, even though the operation modes set up by the user using the display screen may have various difficulty levels. Accordingly, this feature is not taught or suggested by the asserted combination.

Additionally, claim 9 recites “a controller that determines an automatic-clear time for the input apparatus on which the input operation was performed based on the level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus, wherein a different automatic-clear time is determined for each of the plurality of input apparatuses.” This feature is also not taught or suggested by the combination of Yoshida and Fukuda.

The Examiner once again admits that Yoshida does not teach this feature, but instead relies upon Fukuda as allegedly teaching this feature. The auto clear time in Fukuda is calculated based on the device operating mode. Fukuda, paragraphs [0005] and [0019]. As explained above, in Fukuda the levels of difficulty are associated with the operating mode of the device itself, but there is no teaching or suggestion in Fukuda of levels of ease of use associated with input apparatuses. Thus, the auto clear time in Fukuda is not in any way related to the “level of ease of use associated with the input apparatus.” Fukuda therefore fails to overcome the deficiency of Yoshida in teaching this feature.

Accordingly, claim 9 is allowable. Claims 13 and 14 depend from claim 9 and are similarly allowable.

Claims 10-12 and 16 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda and Hirota. Claims 15 and 17-19 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshida in view of Fukuda and Hirota and further in view of well-known art. These rejections are respectfully traversed.


Claims 10-12 and 15-19 depend from claim 9. As discussed in the response of December 22, 2008, Hitora fails to overcome the deficiency of Yoshida and Fukuda in teaching the features of claim 9. Accordingly, claims 10-12 and 15-19 are allowable.

In view of the above, this application is in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. **325772033200**.

Dated: June 15, 2009

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